

# FABIAN QUARTERLY

---

No 48

DECEMBER 1945

---

## THIS NUMBER CONTAINS

### Articles

	Page
GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES	3
by Stephen Taylor, MD, MP	
BRITISH OVERSEAS PUBLICITY - - -	7
by P. C. Gordon Walker, MP	
STATE FACTORIES AND BUILDING MATERIALS - - - - -	11
by G. D. H. Cole and Ian Bowen	
PUBLIC CORPORATIONS - - - -	15
by Margaret A. Room	

### Notes, Etc.

Democracy Returns - - - - -	20
In and Around Number Eleven - - -	23
Book Reviews - - - - -	26

---

FABIAN PUBLICATIONS LTD.  
11, Dartmouth Street, London, S.W.1

---

1/-



# FABIAN QUARTERLY

DECEMBER, 1945

No. 48

## CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
EDITORIAL .. .. .	2
THE FUTURE OF GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES by STEPHEN TAYLOR, M D, M P	3
BRITISH OVERSEAS PUBLICITY by P. C. GORDON WALKER, M P	7
STATE FACTORIES AND BUILDING MATERIALS by G. D. H. COLE and IAN BOWEN	11
PUBLIC CORPORATIONS: Some Suggestions for their Internal Administration .. .. . by MARGARET A. ROOM	15
DEMOCRACY RETURNS: Notes on Elections at Home and Abroad	20
IN AND AROUND NUMBER ELEVEN .. .. .	23
BOOK REVIEWS .. .. .	26

FABIAN PUBLICATIONS, LTD.

11, Dartmouth Street,

S.W.1



## EDITORIAL

The pattern of the new Government's legislation is already being woven. Designs have been or will soon be approved, materials sought and the Parliamentary loom set to work at full capacity. Those who experienced the comparatively inactive months of August and September with some apprehension as to the readiness of Labour ministers to fulfil their electoral promises, can have little doubt that now the preparation of the major bills is nearing completion, the rate of activity looks like being fast.

The Bill to nationalise the Bank of England and make the control of credit policy a public concern is already at Committee stage. Another Bill, which extends the Government's powers to control privately-owned industry, is now near the end of its course. The new policy for civil aviation is not only formulated but accords much more with the Party's policy pamphlet than the timid White Paper of the Coalition Government. There has been the surprise movement, made in conjunction with the Dominion Governments, to convert telecommunications into a public service. The Bill to nationalise the coal industry is to appear soon, likewise a measure for the establishment of a National Investment Board. Five "working parties" are already getting down to the business of preparing schemes for the cotton, hosiery, pottery, boot and shoe, and furniture industries.

In the field of public social service, less plans are at present hatched, but the incubators are overcrowded. Mr Aneurin Bevan's "housing" speech on October 22nd has been quickly followed by bills to control the rents of furnished lettings, the selling prices and rents of new houses, and the supply of building materials and housing components. The "health plan", which the same Minister is preparing in time for presentation to the House of Commons early in the New Year, is eagerly awaited if only because of Mr. Bevan's obvious unwillingness to wed himself to either the Coalition White Paper or the Willink-B.M.A. compromise. Mr. Butler has already seen many important constructions made upon his Education Act which he clearly never intended to be made. Only with regard to social insurance is there impatience over delay.

The Government is, in fact, not merely completing the gaps in its election policy and exhausting inherited stocks of untried legislation. It is making a bold bid to implement the mighty programme of the King's Speech within the time allotted; by doing so it is also ticking off many important paragraphs in *Let us Face the Future*.

That there are gaps and shortcomings is as natural as it is obvious. A Government which claims to represent the people cannot hope to monopolise their best brains. On the home front there is much sound criticism of the choice of priorities (and much unsound criticism based on the assumption that more can be done than is humanly possible).

Most pertinent of all is the indictment of the Government's methods of "putting itself across"; for, if true, it suggests a fault which may mar the success of every piece of legislation, no matter how vital, sound and well-intentioned it may be. We have become so accustomed to the smooth and efficient way in which the Coalition Government explained to the public what it was doing or about to do, that it is now easy to spot where the publicity machine of Socialist change breaks down. The Tory press, forgetting 1931, asks Mr. Dalton rhetorically: "Is your nationalisation really necessary?" And many members of the public are repeating the question with obvious sincerity. They deserve a proper answer.

There are two main aspects of this problem—domestic and foreign. Both are important and need approaching with a sense of urgency. With the appointment of Mr. Francis Williams as "P.R.O. to the P.M.", the time is ripe for widening public discussion on both aspects. It is in the light of these facts that we have asked two of the new Labour back-benchers, both of them experienced in their field, to make a contribution to discussion in the pages of *Fabian Quarterly*.

# THE FUTURE OF GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES

by Stephen Taylor, M D , M P

Government information services are apt to be regarded as an unpleasant, indeed almost indecent, subject by Socialists. We advocate the national ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, yet when it comes to the distribution of information, we funk it. We assert that the conversion of private enterprise to public ownership will increase both efficiency and the satisfaction and freedom of both producer and consumer. We believe in the public ownership of the educational services. Yet some of us are still prepared to back the capitalist newspaper proprietor when he challenges State competition with slogans about freedom of the press. As I see it, there are three hypotheses or beliefs behind such feelings:

1. Government information services are linked in people's minds with Fascist information services.
2. Government information services constitute an attack on freedom of expression.
3. Government information services increase the possibility of the executive putting one over on the legislature.

Each of these calls for examination, and in the course of such an examination, the potential future of a Government Information Service will emerge.

## INFORMATION SERVICES IN A FASCIST STATE

The possibility of the misuse of Government Information Services (hereinafter G I S s) is no less and no greater than with other branches of Government. A Fascist government will use the police, the armed forces, and industry for its purposes along with G I S s. A democratic government will do the same. The B B C is a State monopoly ; like all human institutions its policy and practice have sometimes been open to criticism ; but it is in fact an aid to democracy and a hindrance to Fascism.

Since Government Information Services may affect the minds of the entire population, their potentiality for good or ill is correspondingly great. At the same time, since information is by definition something which is directly or indirectly available to all, anything tendentious or even partisan can immediately be detected ; thus the opportunities for the misuse of G I S s are in reality smaller than in any other sphere of State activity.

Again, in practice, when the content of Government information is examined, it is found to be largely the explanation of policy already discussed and approved by Parliament. If it is Government policy to encourage home horticulture, national savings and diphtheria immunisation, it is fantastic to deny the Government the means of informing the public of these things.

Nevertheless, it is said, G I S s are the thin end of the totalitarian wedge. This objection is raised against every State-sponsored social advance ; and Socialists will not be discouraged by it.



## INFORMATION SERVICES AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The Press rightly fights shy of any Government control. Whether the Press is equally right in favouring its present form of proprietorial control is another matter. The Press equally fights shy of Government competition ; hence its antagonism to public relations officers (hereinafter P R O s). This objection is rationalised on two grounds :

- a. P R O s make things too easy for journalists.
- b. P R O s make the issue of official news fair for all, and thus prevent journalistic scoops.

In fact, all the public and not merely the readers of a particular paper have the right to receive official information which may affect their lives intimately. And if journalistic ability cannot be exercised without scooping Ministerial indiscretions it is poor stuff.

Part of the Press objection to P R O s is also founded on the dislike of the civil service *per se*—or at least on a proprietorial policy opposed to the civil service. At the same time, there is a genuine fear of loss of freedom of expression if G I S s develop, on the part of many who have no connection with the Press. Such a fear is based on a misapprehension of the real functions of G I S s. It is no part of the work of G I S s to boost party policy or individual Ministers ; any attempt to do this is in fact a boomerang on the Minister concerned. But Socialist legislation must inevitably affect intimately and continuously the life of every citizen. He will not be able to profit from it, unless he knows what is available, and what is required of him. Laws and Government regulations are inaccessible and beyond the comprehension of the majority. Even the intelligent have often to employ a specialist to battle with income tax returns. Socialism cannot function unless it is translated into ordinary language which the common man can understand. And the process of interpretation cannot itself be efficient unless the nature of perplexities and difficulties is understood. Thus, a two-way service between citizen and Government is needed.

It is sometimes said that G I S s are all very well provided they confine themselves to laws already enacted by Parliament ; a moment's thought will show that such a limitation is uncalled for. If the citizen has the right to know the provisions of laws when they have been made, he has even more right to know when they are under discussion. Provided the Government presents the facts without distortion, it can fairly claim that it is doing as much to provoke criticism as support. And if distortion does occur, we can rely on Parliamentary opposition to make this abundantly clear.

## EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATURE

The danger that the executive may pass out of the control of the legislature is real enough. The increasing complexity and size of the executive has not been equalled by the increase in the number of Ministers. Further, continuous Parliamentary inquisition is not the best way of getting the best out of the executive. One answer is to make the Minister a director of broad policy, within a clearly defined sphere, leaving detailed executive functions to elected or appointed bodies.

In the case of G I S s, each department should have its P R O, but there must still be a central co-ordinating and producing agency. If this is placed under the Treasury, it will be lost among the Chancellor's other functions, and Parliament check on its work will be as unreal and ineffective as it is in the case of the Stationery Office. A Minister of Information is therefore a safeguard rather than a threat to democratic processes.

The work of the Ministry should largely be transferred to Boards or Corporations of B B C lines. Thus, the Films Division and the Mobile Film Organisation should be stepped up to provide the nucleus of a National Film Corporation. The B B C itself should pass from the Post Office to the M O I, thus relieving it from subterranean Cabinet pressure, and placing responsibility for any policy directives on a definite Minister. The Publications, Exhibitions, Public Meetings and discussion groups Divisions should be converted into a Civilian Bureau of Current Affairs. The Reference Division already provides a nucleus for a Government Enquiry and Fact-Finding Unit, while the overseas divisions constitute a British Overseas Information Service, which competes and should continue to compete healthily with the British Council. The servicing divisions for official campaigns, photographs and general productions might remain as part of the central secretariat under the Ministry.

## STUDYING PUBLIC OPINION

Knowledge of current trends in public opinion offers a safeguard to the Government against mistakes in policy and administration and can help to make its term of office successful. An efficient home opinion study organisation was operated by the M O I during the war. Its purpose was not to enable the Government to follow public opinion, but to make sure that public ignorances and misapprehensions were realised and answered. From this work, it became clear that so far from being impressed by specious explanations, the public demanded the truth and the whole truth from the Government. Opinion studies assisted the working of democracy in wartime.

When Party warfare was resumed, the Home Intelligence Division, as it was called, was wound up. It demanded the co-operation of people of all political complexions, and this could not have been secured as long as its reports remained unpublished. But if opinion studies were conducted under scientific sponsorship, if too the findings were published, the co-operation of the public could be secured, while the opposition in Parliament would know just as much of the state of public opinion as did the Government.

Furthermore, unless the Government itself takes the initiative in the field of opinion study, it will pass entirely to commercial firms, the results being available to the highest bidder. Such a situation would make nonsense of democracy, and might indeed open the way to commercial dictatorship.

## CONCLUSIONS

Information services and public relations work are a twentieth century discovery. They are a logical development out of the new media of mass approach which the cinema, the radio, and the modern newspaper press offer. Commerce has been fairly quick to realise their value ; and the advertising industry has expended a disproportionate amount of time, money, and brain power in attempting to force rival products into the homes of the purchasing public. Sooner or later, it was inevitable that those with ideas to sell, rather than toothpaste, should enter the field. Perhaps it was also inevitable that those with totalitarian ideas should be the first. The war has provided a large-scale demonstration that the ideas and ideals of democracy can be successfully handled in the same way.

One lesson which those who worked in the home field speedily learnt was the ineffectiveness of attempts at exhortation. British people do not like lectures from their Government. But they expect explanations. Action which is, or appears, unreasonable provokes a violent reaction. Information services and public relations offer no help with unreasonable actions ; but when it is the appearance rather than the reality that is at fault, they have a valuable job to do.



What is now needed if we are to make the next five years an unqualified success is a positive information services policy. The Government must purposefully set out to complete the job of informing and educating the citizen in modern democracy and current affairs. It must disregard the bleating of those who claim that they are already doing the job. The plain fact of it is that they are not. Such a policy is not going to be easily implemented. It will be criticised at all stages, and much courage will be needed not to let things drop when they get hot.

For all that, the Government starts with great assets. In the M O I films and publications divisions, it has the two outstanding technical units of the country. In the B B C it has an administrative model which has stood up well to the demands made on it. Many of the departmental P R O s are technically able men, who need only a firm lead from the Government to do first-class work. The new Parliament is more ready to assess Government activity on its merits than was ever the case in the past. It simply remains to decide the course for the future. No Socialist need regret if that decision is 'Full Speed Ahead'.

NOTE:—*This article has not attempted to give a full factual account of war-time information service, which can be obtained from P.E.P. Broadsheet No. 230 : Government Information Services.*



# BRITISH OVERSEAS PUBLICITY

by P. C. Gordon Walker, M P

During the war, without any encouragement from the Government and, indeed, largely without its knowledge, Britain developed the best and ablest overseas propaganda of any country in the world. This was achieved by a chance collection of men and women of ability and faith, who worked out new principles of propaganda. It is significant that these principles were worked out independently by people in different propaganda services with no connexion between them : in all the services concerned the same general principles were elaborated.

At the moment all this knowledge and skill is in danger of being wasted and dissipated. Already the process of degeneration has gone to dangerous lengths.

## WHY PUBLICITY?

The first question is whether it is right to have overseas propaganda services in peace time.

There are four reasons for saying *Yes* to this question. First, such services are an integral part of the modern conduct of foreign affairs. The power and influence of a nation must depend to a very large degree upon the extent to which the rest of the world is aware of its achievements, its aims and its attitude. Although formal channels of communication between Governments must remain an essential part of international relations, it is also true that today *peoples* are in far closer permanent contact with each other, through wireless, press cables and the like, than ever before.

Secondly, Britain is now in a better position to carry weight in the world by these means than ever before. The story of the social transformation on foot needs to be told to the world, not for self-advertisement, but in order to give full weight to our influence in the world.

Thirdly, even the more formal relations between nations cannot be adequately conducted today without the aid of modern means of publicity. If the Foreign Secretary has an important statement of policy to make, it is not enough that it should be formally communicated to the countries concerned. It is essential that it be presented to the attention of the peoples of those countries in a manner that will win their attention.

Fourthly, Britain's export drive cannot be successful without adequate overseas publicity. This should not be just sales talk. The aim should be to create general goodwill towards us, and a general appreciation of the excellence of our goods, in the markets with which we are at any time concerned.

## PUBLICITY PROBLEMS

If it is accepted that we must continue Overseas Publicity in peace time, the very complex question of ways and means arises.

Here two general points may be made. First, it is absolutely essential that a clear decision of policy is made by the government. If the government wants these services it must say so, and it must say so quickly. For doubt and delay are destroying the means for such services. Highly able staffs are being scattered.

Secondly, it is essential that the principles evolved during the war are preserved and become the basis of the peace time services.

This may sound surprising to those (including many Ministers in the Coalition Government) who regard our war-time propaganda as having been a skilful and even wicked enterprise that was conducted by able falsifiers and liars. Such people accepted the Goebbels brands of propaganda as the only known form and were quite unaware that we in this country were evolving a completely different and infinitely more effective form.

The principles we evolved were very simple : so simple that they always came as a second-thought to the people who were drawn into this work from all walks of life. When they first came in, they invariably thought that propaganda was a welter of clever tricks. But all those who made a success of the work soon discovered that the whole art of propaganda consists in telling the truth. They made the great discovery (which was fundamental to our whole war-time propaganda) that it pays to give full publicity to bad news and not (as Germany and other countries thought) to suppress it and gloss it over. All effective propaganda has to be long-term and to consist in building up credibility.

The skill lies in devising effective attractive ways of presenting the truth according to the laws and nature of the medium one is dealing in. And it is this skill that we are in danger of losing by delay.

### THE GOVERNMENT'S ROLE

For future purposes, this point may be summed up as the importance of devising means of leaving the organ of overseas publicity free of *direct* government control. The Government must of course have an overall responsibility, but once it begins to interfere directly there is a great danger that long-term credibility will be impaired and, furthermore, that the skill suited to each medium will be hampered.

It is clear that the government must finance overseas publicity. Much of it must be unremunerative, though some will yield dividends and earn foreign currency. This is particularly important in the field of broadcast publicity. The cost of these services must not be taken out of licence-fees or we shall never be free from the irrelevant issue of the home-listener getting his money's worth. Inevitably, in this event, overseas services would be steadily whittled away.

Finally, there is the problem of sorting out the various disconnected services that grow up for special purposes during the war. The danger of over-centralisation and too much tidiness must be guarded against : for one of the lessons of war-time experience is that control cannot be exercised very far from the outlet-point (microphone, cable, film and booklet). On the other hand considerable economies could be effected both in manpower and in passing the necessary information and broad direction from the Departments concerned.

Two particular problems arise at once : the relations of the B B C's foreign services with the Government and with other forms of publicity ; and the relations of the M O I with the British Council.

The services of the B B C could be rationalised. At the moment there are the European Service centred at Bush House and the Overseas Service (America, the Empire and the Far East) centred in the main at 200, Oxford Street. The main solution is to set up a single Foreign Service of the B B C. This would permit considerable economies in the staffing of the common needs of this Service (news-room, research, etc.). Within the single Foreign Service there would have to be the proper degree of regionalisation : though it must be remembered that great gains in credibility accrue from speaking to different audiences with an undifferentiated voice.

The General Overseas Services (sometimes called 'General Forces Programme') should be separated from the Overseas Service. British Forces overseas should be regarded as a displaced part of the home public.



The real difficulty arises over the relations of the B B C Foreign Service to the Government and to the rest of overseas publicity. On the one hand there must be a common technical organisation (studios, transmitters, engineers) for the whole of the B B C. It is also most important that our overseas wireless services should go out under the name of the B B C. Great goodwill has already been built up under this trade-mark and it is a partial guarantee of the independence of the news and programmes. The Foreign Service of the B B C must retain its independent standards of impartiality, objectivity and news-value.

On the other hand there must be direct Government finance and indirect Government responsibility and direction.

As regards the M O I and the British Council, it can be said that the attempt to distinguish between the two has been a failure. The attempt has been made to differentiate according to subject-matter, the British Council being responsible for cultural publicity and the M O I for the rest. Any such differentiation must break down : there is bound to be a serious overlap and competition : and great wastage of staff. As it turned out the M O I and the British Council each did best in various fields—and in any merger care should be taken to make use of the best skills available.

## PROPOSALS

The concrete proposals I would suggest are these :

(1) A single Foreign Information Organisation should be set up comprising the British Council and the Foreign Services of the M O I.

(2) The Foreign Office should develop a small but skilled Overseas Publicity Department.

(3) This Department should supervise the whole of Overseas Publicity. On it should be effective and responsible representatives of the various Ministries concerned, particularly the Board of Trade.

(4) This Overseas Publicity Department should *not* be a planning body. Planning cannot be done at this level. It should supervise and decide upon the relative size of the various media of publicity under it. It should also receive reports of all major plans and intentions emanating from these media and should co-ordinate them. (At the moment, Films, Books and Radio may independently formulate very similar long-term policies and ideas that are quite unco-ordinated.)

(5) Directly under this Department should be a Research and Information Organisation that services all the media of publicity.

(6) The B B C Foreign Service should be under a Controller appointed jointly by the B B C and the Joint Board. The Controller should have right of access to the Department and to the Foreign Office as a whole.

(7) The Foreign Information Organisation (comprising the British Council and the foreign services of the M O I) should be under a Controller appointed by the Overseas Publicity Department of the Foreign Office and with the same powers as the controller of the B B C Foreign Service.

(8) Both the B B C Foreign Service and the Foreign Information Organisation should be divided into Regions according to the audiences they are directing. No attempt should be made to tie up these two sets of Regions together. Although this might appear the tidy thing to do it would in fact lead to confusion and complication.

(9) The Foreign Information Organisation should have departments dealing with Films, Books and Press.

(10) Abroad there should be a single office responsible to the Overseas Publicity Department of the Foreign Office. At the moment there is confusion

and waste of effort due to the rival and overlapping organisations maintained in foreign countries by the M O I and the British Council and, in some cases, by the B B C.

The single office maintained in the various centres abroad should be attached to the Embassy and should (according to the importance of the work) contain Press-attache, Films Officer, Book Officer, Radio Officer, Public Relations Officer and Research Officer. These should service through their local chief the various media of publicity in London corresponding to their work.

Two final points may be made that really concern home publicity, but which arise out of the present discussion.

The first is this : certain parts of the M O I which are concerned with home publicity should be continued. In particular, documentary films and booklets explaining particular aspects of home affairs (of the type of ' Man-power '). For example, booklets dealing with the new social services, agriculture, youth organisations, etc.

The Government should have a means at its disposal to draw to the attention of the people the need to eat or drink more of some commodity, to improve public health by certain actions, or to move into new towns that are built, and so forth.

The second point is that the competition that is needed in home broadcasting (and which is only imperfectly attained by the Regional broadcasts) could be attained if the services in English of the B B C Foreign Service (say, its English programmes to Europe and to America) were put on wavelengths that could be heard in this country.

---



# STATE FACTORIES AND BUILDING MATERIALS

by G. D. H. Cole and Ian Bowen

The Government has already announced that it proposes to make use of a number of the big, publicly owned war factories for the manufacture of building components and requisites under its own control ; but no announcement has yet been made about the scale on which this is to be done or the methods of organisation that are to be applied. The decision itself is very welcome ; and it is to be hoped that it will be put into effect quickly and on a big scale. There will doubtless be opposition from the existing producers of builders' materials, who will contend that Government competition is always unfair competition or even that the Government is aiming at a socialistic monopoly at their expense ; and the producers will probably be joined in opposition by the builders' merchants, who will also complain of unfair competition and accuse the Government of trying to cut the middleman out. It is a sufficient answer to these objections that the housing problem is so urgent and on so vast a scale that no-one who is really in a position to help towards solving it at a reasonable cost need fear that his help will not be needed. The Government has no need and, I feel sure, no intention of seeking any sort of monopoly : its purpose is to add to the supply of housing requisites and to prevent the shortage from being exploited by the demand for exorbitant prices. It may be objected that in view of the shortage of labour there will not be enough workers possessing the necessary skill to man both Government and private factories ; but this objection does not hold water. Demobilisation will before long ensure a sufficient labour supply to man the Government factories without any adverse effect on the labour available elsewhere, provided only that reasonably economical use is made of skilled labour in factories of both types.

It is already quite plain that, unless prices can be brought down drastically all along the line, the housing programme will involve the taxpayers in unbearably high costs, and there will be strong pressure on financial grounds to fix rents at levels which will be quite beyond the means of those whose needs for houses are most urgent. The prices of materials are, of course, only one factor among a number in determining costs. But they are an important factor ; and the conditions under which housing components are supplied will also greatly affect building costs in other ways. The more components can be standardised in design, and the further pre-fabrication of them can be carried in the factories, the cheaper, the speedier, and the less expensive in terms of skilled labour will be the work needing to be done on the site.

## PRICE, DESIGN, PRE-FABRICATION

Public supply of housing components has thus three aspects, besides that of increasing the total quantities available. These three aspects are price, design, and degree of fabrication. Government action is needed in all three fields—to reduce prices, both by cutting costs and by preventing monopolistic exploitation ; to increase standardisation, both by producing standard components on the largest possible scale and by influencing, and where necessary

controlling, the designs and standards used by private firms ; and to promote prefabrication, both in its own factories and in other factories producing components for housing schemes.

### A NATIONAL HOUSING CORPORATION OR GOVERNMENT AGENCY

How can these three purposes best be promoted in terms of business organisation ? As matters stand, the responsibility for them appears to be divided, how it is not easy to say, between the Ministry of Health, as the department responsible for housing policy, the Ministry of Works, as responsible for Government relations with the building industry, and the Ministry of Supply as the Department in charge of the Royal Ordnance and other Government-controlled factories in which a large part of the work is to be done. I do not propose to discuss in this article whether it would not be preferable to concentrate all these functions in the hands of a single Ministry of Housing, though personally I hold very strongly that it would. I limit myself here to the simpler proposition that there ought to be a single and definitely constituted agency of the Government to take direct and complete charge of three things—(a) the manufacture of housing components in Government and Government-controlled factories ; (b) the sale of these components to authorised purchasers in connection with housing schemes ; and (c) the making of arrangements for the manufacture and supply of other components needed in accordance with nationally approved standards and with as much prefabrication as is deemed desirable in order to speed up construction and economise in the use of skilled building labour.

I should like to see a National Housing Corporation or Government agency set up with these three functions, under the auspices of a single Government department, but left with wide freedom to tackle the business job in its own way, and not made subject to the routine methods of civil service control. Such a body, I suggest, should be related to the appropriate Ministry even more closely than the Central Electricity Board is related to the Ministry of Fuel and Power, and should be organised similarly as a business concern. It should, of course, work in very close relations with the Building Research Station and with the research sections of the Ministry of Works, and should be aided by Advisory Councils representing the Local Authorities, as the principal users of its products, the employers and workers in the industries producing builders' materials and in the building and civil engineering industries, and the architects, quantity surveyors, and other specialists in design.

The first and most urgent duty of this proposed Corporation or Agency would be to draw up a comprehensive plan for the use of the Government and Government-controlled factories placed at its disposal by the Ministry of Supply. It would have to consider how these factories could best be used to increase the total supply of components, to cheapen production, to advance standardisation, and to develop pre-fabrication in suitable cases, and also how, by means of them, a continual check could be kept on the prices charged and on the costs reported by private firms. On this last point, the Government should clearly retain powers not only to fix maximum prices for all components, wherever made, but also to investigate the costs of private firms and to put pressure on high-cost producers to improve their methods.

### EIGHT FIELDS OF WORK

The main fields in which there is clearly room for large-scale government manufacture of components seem to be the following : (a) standardised plumbing equipment, including complete standardised plumbing outfits which can be installed with the minimum of labour on the site in houses of various sizes



and designs ; (b) standardised doors and windows, with frames, in both metal and timber, or in substitute materials ; (c) standardised equipment, such as stoves, ranges, sinks, basins, coppers, cupboards, baths, down to handles, hooks, brackets, and other small components of metal or plastic materials ; (d) slates, tiles, and roofing materials generally ; (e) glass ; (f) plaster-boards and other means of reducing the work of plastering on the site ; (g) wire-mesh for work in reinforced concrete, concrete slabs, beams and similar components in other materials ; and (h) last, but not least, prefabricated units designed to reduce the labour on the site upon walls and foundations—for example, standard sections of brickwork ready to be fitted together, standard roofing sections, inner partitions, steel sections, and complete sheds and out-buildings.

This is not meant to be a complete list, and it deliberately omits such things as gas and electrical fittings, refrigerators, water-heaters, and other supplies for which arrangements would have to be made with the well-established manufacturing industries concerned. It may be desirable to undertake the production of these classes of requisites also in some of the factories controlled by the Corporation ; but I think the main emphasis should be laid at this stage on the eight groups of supplies listed in the preceding paragraph.

(a) **Plumbing.** There is obviously room for an enormous improvement in the standards of plumbing used in Great Britain, not only from the standpoint of efficiency and ease of maintenance, but also from that of initial cost and speed of installation. If plumbing arrangements were thoroughly standardised, and the necessary varieties and no more were made available at the lowest possible prices from Government sources, architects and engineers could adapt their designs to the installation of these standardised sets, and mobile squads of skilled workmen could go from site to site installing them as the appropriate stage of construction was reached. They could be made easy of access for repair and maintenance, and would thus reduce the call on skilled plumbing labour for this purpose as well as for the original installation. A good deal of study of this question has already been undertaken in the Ministry of Works, including full reports on existing American and Scandinavian methods. It now remains to translate this study into practical terms of standardised bulk supply, including arrangements for organised installation on the site.

(b) **Joinery and Windows.** Standard fabrication of doors, windows, frames, and other joinery or metal components of similar kinds is no new thing. There have been both extensive importation of prefabricated joinery and extensive home manufacture of components of both wood and metal. The problem here is simply one of increasing the scale of manufacture, and of securing wider application of common standards. It will be easy to find factories that can be shifted over to these types of work without very prolonged re-tooling or other adaptation.

(c) **Stoves, Boilers, Basins, Sinks, etc.** Light castings were among the components in which there occurred sensational price-ramps after the last war. A good deal of the required manufacture can be done in existing privately owned factories ; but there is room besides for additional factories, and it is of the greatest importance that the State should run these in such a way as to compete with the private suppliers and thus prevent the appearance of a ring. Production in this field is easy to standardise ; and there is room for large economies in well-planned, large-scale units of manufacture.

(d) **Roofs and Roofing Materials.** Close attention should be given to increased standardisation of roofs and roofing materials. Here again the bulk of the production of slates and tiles can probably be left to privately owned quarries and works ; but much could be done by standardising the proportions of roof-frames, and perhaps by the supply of standard pre-fabricated sections ready for easy installation.

(e) **Glass.** The glass industry has had already to cope with large demands arising out of air-raid damage ; and the methods of control applied during the war can easily be adapted to meet the needs of the housing programme. The setting-up even of one or two publicly owned works would be a valuable check on the prices, costs and quantities of the supplies forthcoming from private factories.

(f) **Plastering.** Plastering was a very bad bottle-neck after the last war, and will be so again unless energetic measures are taken to reduce the demand for skilled plastering on the site. Here again, it is only a matter of applying known and well-tried methods on a larger scale.

(g) **Cement.** There has been much wartime experience of the methods of construction in concrete on war sites, under the auspices largely of civil engineering firms. This experience has been especially in the erection of hostels and larger buildings ; and it should now be applied more particularly in connection with blocks of flats, community buildings, schools and other service erections, in such a way as to make quality higher and more uniform, while making only a limited call on the work of highly skilled craftsmen.

(h) **Prefabricated Walls and Sections.** The most controversial issue is that of prefabrication of the walls of permanent dwellings. Here there are many intermediate stages between the house built of brick by the traditional methods and the completely pre-fabricated shell, disposing altogether with bricklaying except for the foundations. It seems likely that, in view of the prevailing conditions of labour shortage, the balance of advantage lies with really large-scale experiment with some of these intermediate types. This involves the use of a large number of factories ; for it cannot be economical to carry heavy prefabricated sections except over relatively short distances. There is, however, good evidence that excellent houses can be built of pre-fabricated brick sections, and that these can be transported economically over sufficient distances to make the establishment of factories in large centres of population well worth-while, provided that provision is also made for the mass-production of the plant required for handling the sections, and for its mobility from site to site as it is wanted. Accordingly, the Government should arrange to manufacture this plant as well as the sections, and to own and operate it in order to make it available over the largest possible areas.

## WHAT IS NEEDED

Here, then, is a very brief sketch of what can be done by the right use and direction of government-owned and operated factories towards solving one part of the housing problem. It will be realised that, in putting such a project into execution, everything will depend on putting the right men in control and thereafter giving them, within the broad directives of public policy, pretty much of a free hand. That is why I have insisted on the need for setting up a special Housing Corporation to undertake the task, and to work in closely with the Local Authorities on which most of the direct responsibility for promoting standardisation and using the new techniques which can be made available for speeding up construction will be bound to fall.



# PUBLIC CORPORATIONS

Some suggestions for their Internal Administration

by Margaret A. Room

The new Government will soon be giving effect to its plans for nationalising certain basic industries and public services. It will almost certainly do so through the medium of public corporations rather than Civil Service departments, and it is appropriate at this stage to consider certain aspects of their internal organisation. Although their activities will doubtless be brought into line with Government policy and, in particular, with an overall economic plan, these corporations will be self-financing and self-accounting. It is now widely agreed that they should have discretion to carry out their own day-to-day administration.

One of the chief problems is how to make their administration as efficient as possible and to create a public service which can offer careers at least as attractive as those offered by private enterprise. During this century several public concerns such as the L.P.T.B., the Metropolitan Water Board, the B.B.C. and the Central Electricity Board have been set up. Each performs a distinctive function and has developed its individual methods. The success of their administration has not been even and so far they have not gone far towards pooling their ideas and experience. With the prospect of new corporations being set up in the near future, the time is ripe to draw from the successes and failures which these bodies have experienced some of the more salient conclusions. In doing so we recognise that (i) it is undesirable to model the internal administration of the new bodies closely upon Civil Service lines, which are too rigid and stratified for organisations needing flexibility, and (ii) the character of administration in any one corporation must depend to a large extent upon the function which it performs, so that conclusions based on past experience must be of a general nature.

The public corporation must remain responsible to the appropriate Minister for the execution of his general policy, and Parliament should have an opportunity of discussing its work. An annual debate at which the financial statement of the corporation is presented would be a suitable occasion. The Minister should not, however, have to answer questions sporadically on day-to-day matters.

A primary consideration in setting up a new corporation must be the appointment of a governing body which is sound, competent and, in appropriate cases, truly representative. Such appointments should not be a reward for political service. A Member of Parliament should be ineligible and no member of the Board should be financially connected with an interested company. The size and composition of the Board are most important factors which require much fuller discussion than can be afforded here. Past experiments in public corporations have shown wide diversity in both these respects and not all of the governing bodies have been successful. As a general principle, however, it is believed that the governing bodies should be big enough to give adequate representation, but not so large as to be cumbersome.

## A POLICY FOR ADMINISTRATION

The chief criticisms levelled at the public corporation are that the standard of service to the consumer is lower than that given by private enterprise and that the consumer is subject to petty officialdom—"bureaucracy". The obvious reasons for such allegations and the danger of their being true are that the public monopolistic corporation has no competition to fear and that the staff have a high degree of security of employment which may lead them to think that they need not bother about the "customer". The proposals which follow show how these criticisms can be avoided. It must, however, be borne in mind that in the transition stage of taking over private enterprise, the existing staff will form a large part of the new bodies, and the process of recruiting new staff and training them will be comparatively slow. The special training of the existing staff will be a matter for careful consideration by those responsible for their management.

A policy for internal administration and a plan for recruitment, training, promotion and welfare of staff must therefore be adopted at the outset. The public utility can budget for its income and expenditure, and it can offer its employees security of tenure. To offset the complacency, lack of initiative and of personal responsibility which this may engender, it is essential to inculcate in all members of a public corporation a pride in the service they are giving and in the prestige of the organisation to which they belong. Moreover, the corporation as an employer, must have power of dismissal on grounds of unsatisfactory service. For these reasons it is preferable for the administrative units of such bodies not to be too big; in the case of nation-wide utilities they should be administered on a regional or departmental basis with Head Office control as light as possible.

The staff of a public corporation, whatever its product, generally fall into three categories.

1. Administrative staff—which includes everyone from management to clerks.
2. Specialists—for example, the engineering experts in mining, electricity, radio, steel.
3. Operatives—under this heading are miners, steel workers, transport workers and the like.

With the two last groups it is not proposed to deal in any great detail. Though the second category are likely to find a market for their abilities in whatever sphere they choose to work, public service should be able to provide greater scope for research and for the adoption of developments suggested because the profit motive is not the over-riding factor. The operational staff will benefit in that they will be assured of regular employment and will be included in such schemes as superannuation, sick pay, holidays, and welfare facilities. Their interests will also continue to be guarded by their Trade Unions.

The first group, the administrative staff, are those for whom no general policy has so far been laid down and for whom, as a rule, Trade Unions are not strongly organised. Public service must be made attractive to them and should offer more than mere security of office with a pension at the end of a lifetime of service. This group includes the officials who have contact with the consumer, in rate-collecting offices, in showrooms, or dealing with queries and conducting correspondence. It is in this sphere that the charge of petty officialdom must be avoided. The corporation should therefore aim to provide good working conditions, satisfactory remuneration and chances of promotion. In all branches a carefully planned training scheme is necessary—the importance of this cannot be too highly stressed. A well-qualified personnel administrator, who should ensure that a standard practice of staff



management is maintained throughout all departments, is an essential part of the management of all corporations. Every department large enough should have its own staff officer responsible for recruitment, transfers, training and promotions and small geographically scattered sections should be grouped into a regional unit.

## RECRUITMENT

Most public corporations will have a high proportion of clerical staff—typists, stenographers, accounting machine operators, wages and filing clerks. There will be various levels for entry into different grades of work, but the system of recruitment should be uniform. Public service should be open to all whose educational and technical qualifications (in typing, machine operating, etc., are up to the required standard. Any kind of nepotism or wire-pulling should be made impossible. Academic examinations should not be the only qualification, although for junior clerks the School Certificate for certain groups might be guide to the standard set for entry. Tests in technical skill should be given where applicable. Ultimately, a standard form of aptitude tests may be evolved for staff in these categories, but there is, as yet, insufficient knowledge on this subject for them to be applied effectively. All vacancies in junior grades should be advertised and/or notified to the Ministry of Labour. Recruits in all grades should be on probation for at least six months; in low age groups a year might be more practicable since it is not easy to assess how a sixteen-year old boy or girl will develop. An established corporation, in the same way as the civil service or local government department, is providing an entrant with a job for life, and it is not in the consumer's interest that the organisation should carry passengers. The probationary period will help to eliminate misfits.

Provision should be made for the recruitment to a small proportion of administrative posts from outside the corporation, otherwise such persons as university graduates will be lost to it. This will, of course, apply to a greater degree to the recruitment of technical staff in the specialist category.

Agreement between different public corporations might with advantage be reached so that wages and conditions of employment are comparable. It would not be in the public interest for, say, the gas corporation to pay lower wages than the electricity board for similar work so that the employees of the one were of a lower calibre than the other.

## GRADING AND PROMOTION

Wage and salary scales should be fixed for all grades of work and should be available to the public and, more particularly, to the staff. This avoids suspicion and often unfounded jealousy among employees. An annual increment should be paid up to a certain maximum, subject to satisfactory service. Equal pay for equal work should be the rule.

Promotion will be one of the main incentives to good work and each employee's interests should be carefully watched. It must be remembered that in a corporation employing a very large number of people on routine work a bottle-neck is soon reached. As far as possible, therefore, promotion should be from within the organisation, with the proviso already stated for recruiting from outside a small number of personnel with more highly trained brains. Also, an employee of one corporation might, with mutual advantage, seek promotion in another and should not be debarred from doing so. Posts offering promotion should be advertised to all staff and complete freedom to apply granted to all those with the qualification of reasonably long service in one post. Promotion from one section to another, one department or one area to another ought to be not only allowed but encouraged, thus avoiding the stultifying effect of waiting for dead men's shoes. In other words, pro-

motion should be by merit and not by length of service alone. Selection for posts should be made by an impartial appointments Board of not less than three officials, one of whom should be a staff officer. Only if a candidate cannot be selected from internal applicants should a vacancy be advertised publicly.

Annual reports by heads of sections, to be scrutinised by the staff officer, will enable the management to keep in touch with the progress of each individual.

## CONDITIONS OF WORK

Conditions of work and such benefits as superannuation schemes should be in accordance with modern practice. Office accommodation should be good. It is difficult for a public servant to be proud of his organisation when working in dingy offices.

As in the case of wage and salary scales, it would be most satisfactory if public corporations agreed to adopt a standard practice for holidays, sick pay, and superannuation schemes. It would be desirable for an employee transferring from one corporation to another to take with him benefits accruing from length of service. One of the chief factors which make a capable and ambitious employee hesitate in changing his employment is that his dependents may suffer loss of pension and other benefits if he leaves an organisation in which he has worked for some years.

## STAFF TRAINING

All staff in the administrative category should receive thorough training both on entry and at later stages when ready for promotion. Every member, besides learning his or her specific job, should be taught, at least in outline, something of the product of the corporation and of the service to the community the organisation is providing. For clerical and other routine workers a short course at a training centre is the simplest form of instruction, including lectures in the history and organisation of the body, visits to operational centres, the standard practice to be adopted in carrying out their specific functions, and the staff policy of the corporation. Where there are public show-rooms or rate-collecting offices, visits to them might be arranged during the early post-entry months. Each newcomer must be made to feel his or her responsibility towards the whole service. It is comparatively easy to arrange such training in large departments centralised in one building. For small units a short period should be spent by the newcomer in the nearest large centre. If a new development in production or in its distribution takes place, the administrative staff should be informed of it, either by a talk from a senior official or by a written report—the former is, of course, desirable.

Details of general and specific training might very well be on the lines suggested by the Government White Paper on training of civil servants, published in May, 1944. To the mutual advantage of Government Departments and public corporations, civil servants could be seconded to work in the appropriate corporations. For example, staff of central planning board would learn from as well as contribute to a regional branch of a corporation.

With regard to the training of staff entering on higher grades, it is vitally important that they should have a thorough working knowledge of the whole organisation. Short periods should be spent in each of the main sections, with particular emphasis on those most closely in touch with the consumer. It is most desirable that heads of sections and supervisors be given the maximum of responsibility and the greatest scope for initiative ; to undertake either they must know how their unit fits into the whole organisation. On them, too, will fall the duty of inspiring their staff with the idea of public service since they have the day-to-day contact with the lower ranks.



Particular attention should be given to all staff meeting the consumer—in showrooms, enquiry offices and as rate collectors—since any organisation is judged on the impression created by the individual representative met.

In many respects it should be simple to drive home to employees the importance of an efficient service since they are themselves consumers of the products which will be provided by these public utilities, for example, fuel, light, water and transport.

## **STAFF ASSOCIATIONS**

The management of a well-run corporation with a sound staff policy has nothing to fear from staff representation and the employees of one not so well-run will benefit from it. It is therefore in the interests of both parties that the staff should belong to an appropriate association and that the management should treat it with respect.

## **PUBLIC RELATIONS**

A section devoted to the securing and retaining of the goodwill of the public is an essential part of a public corporation. Publicity will be the work of specialised staff, but good relations can most readily be established by the conduct and manner of the staff in the public eye. The public relations section should ensure that the service offered and advertised is, in fact, carried out by the corporation. All staff should be encouraged to make suggestions for improved service and monetary rewards and internal publicity might be given for all suggestions adopted. The public should be encouraged to visit works and distributing plants by the arrangement of tours. This is undoubtedly successful as carried out by certain commercial firms.

With regard to showrooms and enquiry offices, one suggestion is that public utilities should combine, particularly in small towns and country areas, in sharing a building so that the consumers can transact all their business under one roof. The facilities offered by all corporations would in this way be brought to their notice without effort. The sharing of maintenance costs would be an economic proposition to the bodies concerned.

## **CONCLUSION**

There is nothing new or revolutionary in any of the above ideas. They have all been adopted to a greater or less degree by some corporations and large commercial enterprises. The aim of the governing body of any public utility must primarily be to serve the consumers' needs efficiently and economically and to be a good employer. Both consumer and public servant will benefit by progressive and intelligent administration.

---

# DEMOCRACY RETURNS

## Notes on Elections at Home and Abroad

A recent Fabian pamphlet<sup>1</sup> analyses the leftward swing in the British General Election held last July. While the pamphlet was in the press, elections in the liberated countries of Western Europe were showing similar trends and similar successes for the left-wing parties. Most of these elections have not been reported in detail by the daily press of this country; indeed, it is difficult to collect from the daily newspapers enough complete information to make a clear statement of the statistical results. In order to fill this omission, it is proposed to summarise the more important European election results in this and future issues of *Fabian Quarterly*. Let us begin at home.

### GREAT BRITAIN

The elections of County Borough, non-County Borough and Metropolitan Borough Councils, held on November 1st, falsified the hopes of those who believed that the Labour Party's overwhelming success in July was due to the mental aberration of the electors, who before long would see their folly.<sup>2</sup> Significant Labour gains were recorded almost everywhere, not the least remarkable being in middle-class Golders Green.

Of the Metropolitan Borough Councils, which, of course, were completely re-elected, 5 Councils were won by Labour and added to the 17 already in its hands; these are Lewisham, Paddington, Stoke Newington, St. Pancras and Wandsworth. The Municipal Reformers were forced back to their six residential and commercial strongholds—Chelsea, Hampstead, Holborn, Kensington, St. Marylebone and Westminster—and even in these substantial successes were scored. The City of Westminster, accustomed to a 100% Tory council, may now enjoy the odd prospect of 5 Labour and 3 Communist representatives on the opposition. In Chelsea, too, the Labour Party has broken its 'duck'. Holborn is nearly won—and may in fact be won soon, since one ward returning nine members has yet to poll.

Of Labour's 1,314 candidates in the L C C area, 1,029 were successful, compared with 321 out of 1,150 Tories, and the Party now holds 75% of the 1,377 seats on the 28 Metropolitan Borough Councils. Labour gained 245 seats net and the Tories lost 195.

Outside London, apart from a press 'hand-out' covering 148 provincial towns and cities out of 392, news has so far been scrappy and insufficient. Even so, it appears that in these boroughs 1,833 Labour candidates (66% of their total) were returned compared with 490 Tories (33%) and 108 Liberals (25%). Labour had a net gain of 950 seats and the Tories and Liberals net losses of 473 and 129 seats respectively. As regards the 83 County Boroughs, which are important because their councils run both 'county' and 'district' services, the position is, however, clear. Labour now controls 39 of them with a clear majority of councillors, and is the strongest, though a minority party, on another 18.<sup>3</sup> On the remaining 26, Labour is not in the lead, though if assisted by the Liberals or Independents it may often be stronger than the Tories. Information obtained for 125 non-County Boroughs shows that 31 of their councils are now controlled by Labour and in 10 more Labour is the strongest

<sup>1</sup> *The General Election, 1945, and After*, by Margaret Cole: Research Series, No. 102, 1s.

<sup>2</sup> On the basis of existing information it is impossible to analyse fully the content of these results. In the next issue of the *Quarterly* a more complete statement, it is hoped, will be made.

<sup>3</sup> Including Great Yarmouth, where Labour can only make this claim if it has I L P support.



minority party. It would thus seem that Labour can now control (even if by minority rule) the municipal life of nearly half the principal towns of England and Wales. This success is even more striking than the figures suggest; for outside London only one-third of the members of each Council retired, plus those who had been co-opted during the war when elections were suspended. The number of vacant seats in provincial boroughs was, therefore, little more than 40% of the total. Had there been a complete 'turn-out' it is reasonably certain that many more towns, including Birmingham and Manchester, would have been won.

The Scottish municipal elections, held five days later, brought similar results. After winning more than 200 seats, the Party now controls 30 out of the 200 Burghs, compared with 13 before the election.

## FRANCE

Whereas in Britain the General Election results coloured the conduct of the municipal contests, in France the reverse was true. The amber light which was shone at the cantonal elections in October turned red when, later in the same month, the General Election was held.

The cantonal elections, in which nearly 3,000 seats were contested, brought the Socialist Party an outstanding success. The Radical Socialists, a left-wing liberal party, also did well, and the Communist representation became four times what it was in 1937, whereas the Socialists only doubled theirs. Even so, when in the General Election the Communists captured more seats in the Assembly than any other party, it came as something of a surprise. Even greater surprise was caused by the unexpected success of the Catholic Resistance party, the Mouvement Republicain Populaire and the corresponding so good. The fullest available results (excluding Algeria and Oran) are as follows:<sup>1</sup>

				<i>Seats obtained</i>		
				<i>General</i>	<i>Municipal</i>	
Communists	..	..	..	142	..	328
M R P	..	..	..	140	..	230
Socialists	..	..	..	133	..	811
Republican Democrats	..	..	..	26	..	269
Radical Socialists	..	..	..	19	..	607
Others	..	..	..	62	..	729
				522	2,974	

Whilst these elections show a leftward trend as marked as that in Britain it is very much less clearly defined. Of the four parties with substantially progressive views, two prospered when the municipalities were contested but lag behind the other two in the Assembly.

## OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

In Western Europe as a whole, the swing to the left has been clear, though not always so significant or successful as in France and Britain. In the small state of LUXEMBOURG, for instance, the Socialists actually lost 6 seats, though the Communists, hitherto unrepresented, won 5, and a new centre party, the Democratic Patriots, won 8. The control of the right-wing Christian Socials, though far from secure, was scarcely impaired. They secured 25 seats, the Socialists 12, and the Democratic Patriots 8.

In NORWAY and DENMARK, the most significant electoral success went to the Communists, who gained 11 and 15 seats in the respective Parliaments. The complete results were as follows:

<sup>1</sup> These figures are taken from the French newspaper, *Le Moutier*, but even so are not quite complete.

NORWAY				DENMARK*			
		Seats				Seats	
		Present	Pre-war			Present	Pre-war
Labour	.. ..	76	70	Social Democratic	.. ..	48	66
Liberal	.. ..	20	23	Liberal	.. ..	38	28
Communist	.. ..	11	0	Communist	.. ..	18	3
Conservatives	} right-wing	25	36	Radical Left	.. ..	11	13
Christian Popular		8	0	Conservative	.. ..	26	31
Agrarian		10	18	Others	.. ..	7	10†
Nazi	.. ..	Banned 3					
		150	150			148	151

\* Results not yet complete.

† Includes three Nazis.

Labour gained 6 seats in Norway and just managed to obtain an absolute majority in the *Storting*. In Denmark, where the leftward swing was less marked, the Social Democrats lost ground to both the Liberals and Communists.

In Eastern Europe only two countries, Hungary and Yugoslavia, have so far held General Elections—both in November. Electoral conditions in the two countries were very different. In Hungary, where the 3 main parties in the Provisional Government fought with separate lists, the results—now almost complete—show the Smallholders leading with 242 seats out of 406 and scoring an easy victory over the Communists (70 seats) and Social Democrats (69 seats). This result has followed close upon the striking triumph of the Smallholders over the combined list of left-wingers in the Budapest municipal elections.

In Yugoslavia the National Liberation Front of Marshall Tito has scored a definite success. Since all opposing parties retired before the election, as a protest against the way in which it was being conducted, the vote was a straight one—for or against the National Front. The final results are not yet to hand, but already two things are clear—(1) that nearly all those who were allowed to vote used their votes, and (2) that 80–90% voted for the National Front.



# IN AND AROUND NUMBER ELEVEN

## A Quarterly Report on Fabian Activities

### LOCAL SOCIETIES AND SOCIALIST PROPAGANDA COMMITTEE

MESSAGE FROM MORGAN PHILLIPS. The following is the text of a message from Morgan Phillips, Secretary of the Labour Party, written specially for the Directive of the Local Societies Committee :

The Fabian Society's Report on the work of its local Societies during the General Election is a great tribute to the spirit of co-operation and team work which was a characteristic of the Labour Party's triumphant bid for power. It was and is the fine research work of the Fabian Society which built the enduring foundations of Labour Party policy, and in the memorable Election of 1945 we have to thank the Society in no small measure for its participation in the actual election of Britain's first Labour Government with power.

The success of the new Government will be vital in determining the Party's future, and in the achievement of this success the Party's work *outside* Parliament will play a great part. Our rapidly expanding local Parties must be well-informed and wisely guided. They must be capable of passing on their information regularly and accurately to the public. This must be an essential part of local Party work in the future if the Labour Government's great charter of social and industrial legislation is to be promptly and properly appreciated by the public.

We who are outside Parliament must work continually to this end, and I know that we can rely upon a whole-hearted response from the Fabian Society and its local associations in this great task.

WORK FOR THE BOROUGH COUNCILS. It has always been a principle of the Fabian Society to encourage its members to be active in local politics. The Local Societies Committee and the majority of Local Societies have therefore been concentrating upon the Borough Council Elections—the first contest for seven years.

#### CONFERENCES ON 'WINNING THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS'

In order to stimulate interest, the Committee organised two conferences, one for Northern Societies at Tong Hall, near Bradford, and the other for its Home Counties, at Surrey Crest, Godstone. Both conferences had one lecture on the general politics of the Elections, two lectures on the technique of municipal electioneering, and a final session dealing with the duties and responsibilities of councillors. The Northern lecturers were Maurice Orbach, M.P., L C C, Len Williams, the Yorkshire Regional Organiser of the Labour Party, and Alderman Brett. Representatives were present from Societies at Sheffield, Leeds, Keighley, Wakefield, Hartlepoons, Tyneside, Barnsley, Manchester, Warrington and Streatham, and a number of prospective candidates took part in the discussion, together with friends from D L P's.

At Surrey Crest, R. Sargood, M P, L C C, Miss Joan Bourne, Women's Organiser for the London Labour Party, and Alderman A. Emil Davies, L C C, were the lecturers, and 53 people were present, including representatives from Croydon, Streatham, Central London, Morden, Weston-super-Mare, Chiswick and West London, Bournemouth, Brighton, Canterbury, Hampstead and Marylebone, Bedford. The satisfactory features about these two conferences were (1) the large number of young people who attended, and (2) those present were assisting actively either as prospective councillors or as workers in the Borough Councils' election work. It is hoped that the Regional Committee of local Fabian Societies will organise conferences on these lines from time to

time on various subjects. We are grateful for the co-operation of our lecturers and especially for the Regional Organisers of the Labour Party.

**COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTIONS.** We have been glad to record the work done by Local Societies in close co-operation with D L P s in the General and Borough Council Elections. It is now necessary to give very serious thought to the County Council Elections next March.

It is not always fully realised in the Movement (outside London) what very great powers are possessed by county authorities. Education, medical and hospital services, most police forces and public assistance are some of the responsibilities vested in County Councils. It is therefore all the more surprising that in 1937, when the last County Council Elections occurred, a great many seats were uncontested.

Local Democracy cannot function efficiently unless there is focused upon it some of the interest and enthusiasm aroused in Parliamentary contests. The Labour Party has a majority on only 4 of the 62 councils in England and Wales and is not in charge of any county authority in Scotland.

Local Fabian Societies are being encouraged to stimulate interest in this last stronghold of reaction by arranging lectures on the work of County Councils, by nominating candidates and in general by stressing the importance of capturing for Labour majorities on as many county councils as possible.

## THE COLONIAL BUREAU

**THE FUTURE OF CEYLON.** Ceylon is to have a new Constitution. A Commission which visited Ceylon last year has just reported (the Soulbury Report) suggesting a Constitution closely resembling the Westminster model. Delegations of the different communities in Ceylon have visited Britain to put their views to the Colonial Office on these reforms. They have met representatives of the Bureau in a number of lengthy discussions.

**TRADE UNION DELEGATES.** A number of round-table discussions have been held with colonial delegates attending the World Trade Union Conference in Paris. This has provided opportunities for members of the Bureau to discuss fully trade union and political problems in Cyprus, Trinidad, Jamaica, British Guiana and Ceylon.

**PARLIAMENTARY WORK.** The Bureau has approached a number of the new Labour M P s who have shown interest in colonial affairs, and a large panel of collaborators is being built up in the House of Commons. The response of the new M P s has been very encouraging and colonial question time in the House promises to be a lively affair.

**NEWFOUNDLAND.** Promises have been made repeatedly to the people of Newfoundland by the British Government during the last few years, that, immediately at the end of the war, steps would be taken towards restoring some measure of responsible government to the people of Newfoundland. As no action had been taken to implement these promises the Bureau addressed a memorandum to the Dominions Office urging that a national Convention be established to discuss the constitutional future of Newfoundland, and that after a year of such discussion, a plebiscite should be taken in Newfoundland. The Dominions Office has replied that these views have been considered and a public statement will shortly be made.

**WHITE SETTLEMENT IN EAST AFRICA.** Reports from Tanganyika have given rise to concern that plans are being made to encourage further European settlement there. All information coming from Tanganyika confirms the fact that there is no economic basis for such settlement, which would have to be subsidised if it is to be successful. The Bureau has always opposed the encouragement of subsidised European settlement in African territories, and a memorandum has been sent to the Colonial Office on this subject.



**LOCAL GOVERNMENT.** Work has been started on a major research project—a study of local government in the Colonies. A new technique is being planned in this research, that the sections of the different Colonies should be written by people on the spot from their own practical experience there. The Bureau has now developed sufficient contacts in the different Colonies to make this possible. It is hoped in this way to bring first-hand information and experience to the study of a difficult and complicated subject.

**WEST INDIAN MEETING.** A successful tea-meeting was held on the 26th October and addressed by Professor T. S. Simey, who has been for four years Social Welfare Adviser to the Development and Welfare Commission in the West Indies. Professor Simey spoke frankly of his experiences in the West Indies, and was followed by Mr. Louis Byles, Town Clerk of St Anns, Jamaica, and by a number of other West Indians in the audience.

## HOME RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

**POLITICAL SECTION.** The major outcome of the Research Planning Committee's recent overhaul of Home Research has been the decision to initiate a series of research projects into politics and administration. A committee will shortly be set up for this purpose.

**HOUSING RESEARCH.** A Committee has also been set up, with G. D. H. Cole in the chair, to conduct research into future housing problems, such as the use of direct labour, housing finance, the development plans of local authorities, social services on housing estates, building societies, housing administration, etc. It is hoped to issue a series of pamphlets and articles—the first article, as it happens, appears in this issue.

**THE COTTON INDUSTRY.** With the appointment of a working party to investigate its economic and technical problems, 'cotton' has been scheduled for priority treatment. A policy for the reorganisation of the industry, which should emerge from the labours of this working party, is badly needed. The elements of such a policy are carefully worked out in a forthcoming research pamphlet, *Cotton: A Working Policy*.

**CONTROL OF LABOUR.** The recent T U C statement on the need for early decontrol of labour raises an important issue, *viz.*, what machinery should be devised to ensure the preservation of that which has been beneficial in wartime control (*e.g.* security of work, ease of mobility) and the abolition of all that is onerous (such as compulsory direction). A new research pamphlet, *The Control and Decontrol of Labour*, analyses this complex of problems and makes bold and constructive suggestions for their solution.

**PROFITS.** A statistical study of profits during the war and of the danger of a profits boom in future years has been completed by T. Barna and will soon be published. In order to avoid lengthening the pamphlet unduly, discussion on policy measures has been almost completely eliminated, and a second pamphlet is being planned to fill this gap.

**CHILDREN WITHOUT HOMES.** Since the Curtis Committee, which is enquiring into the care of homeless children, is not likely to be reporting at an early date, the memorandum which Helen Donington has written for the Society on this subject is being submitted to members of this committee as *informal* evidence. Publication as a pamphlet should follow shortly afterwards.

## WOMEN'S GROUP

The Women's Group at its last meeting had a full report from its representative on the Standing Joint Committee of Working Women's Organisations, Mrs. L. L'Estrange Malone. There was a keen discussion and several suggestions for the work of the Group were made which will be followed up as opportunity arises.

## BOOK REVIEWS

(Books received from Publishers only)

### **BEATRICE WEBB** By Margaret Cole (Longman's 10/6)

A remarkable book. The author has given us a comprehensive portrait of Beatrice and (inevitably) Sidney Webb. It is even more than that, being also an epitomised guide to the political, economic and social movements of the past half-century, with a history of the Fabian Society generously thrown in. The painstaking genius of the Webbs is impartially portrayed, and in the chapter 'The Partnership Begins' their negative quality of remoteness from ordinary human weaknesses is delicately and cleverly indicated. The reviewer, however, recollects a conversation with the male member of the partnership about the piano left to Mrs. Webb by Herbert Spencer: 'We had to make room for some more books (a typical touch this) and as we had no children, a fact that my wife and I have always deplored, we gave it to the London School of Economics'. Altogether a first-class book of great value to the student of politics, and of fascinating interest to every Fabian.

A. E. D.

### **AGRICULTURE TODAY AND TOMORROW** Edited by Sir John Russell (Joseph 8/6)

A reprint of eleven lectures given to the Royal Society of Arts in 1942-43. Excellent up-to-date summaries of recent progress in land reclamation, ley farming, fertiliser problems, mechanisation, co-operation and agricultural economics and statistics in this country.

F. W. B.

### **THE EDUCATION OF JUNIOR CITIZENS** By Brian Stanley (U L P 3/6)

The book deals with the relationship to life of boys and girls who, having left full-time schooling are at once Society's apprentices and industry's hands. All who help young people are, the writer tells us, though not necessarily teachers, at any rate 'educators'. The title belongs to youth leaders just as the title 'apprentice' belongs to students in county colleges. The trade and craft which is being learned or taught at this stage is, or ought to be, the whole art of life. Nor can any young person be said to reach maturity until he has developed as far as he can in his particular circumstances. The mature person is one who, having developed as far as he can, feels at ease in a certain range of surroundings. The book makes a useful contribution to the right development of youth centres and county colleges.

B. D.

### **EDUCATION FOR RESPONSIBLE LIVING** By Wallace B. Donham (Milford 16/-)

The book is a challenge to American liberal-arts education to fit the youth of today to life in a modern democracy. The last 75 years, the writer points out, have been characterised by explosive changes in scientific and technical knowledge, which have affected the life and social surroundings of multitudes. In this triumph of science and technology, general education has not been brought into line with the changed conditions and human values have tended to be overlooked. 'Knowledge comes but wisdom lingers'. Hence the present instability of the Western democracies. To create a new sense of unifying purpose and to make a contribution in social and humanistic fields comparable in effectiveness to scientific and technical training, is thus the great task before the liberal-arts college. The concrete reforms in general education proposed by the writer will give food for thought not only to Americans.

B. D.

**ADULT EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND** By A. B. Thompson (Milford 15/-)

The book traces the growth of adult education from its earliest beginnings, when in 1841 an enterprising passenger on board the *Lord Auckland* gave a talk to emigrants about schools, mechanics, institutes, etc. The movement has grown with the present century. Between 1915 and 1943, the number of classes rose from 18 to 311, and of students from 429 to 5,989. The writer doubts the wisdom of placing adult education under direct government control. Free discussion, even discussion of contentious subjects, is the essence of a large part of adult education. 'It is ironically true,' he states, 'that what many people in a democracy appear most to dread is the use for political ends of the power placed in the hands of their elected representatives'.

B. D.

**MUNICIPAL AND PRIVATE ENTERPRISE HOUSING** By R. L. Reiss (Dent 3/6)

The Co-operative Permanent Building Society should be congratulated, for the publication of this book, the first of a series. The author is to be congratulated upon his clear and competent survey of the 'Housing Acts'. In a few pages the facts of all the Housing Legislation have been clearly set down, and this little volume should be in the hands of all who wish to take an interest in the Housing question.

E. J. G.

**DEMOCRACY REBORN** By Henry A. Wallace (Hammond 15/-)

The speeches and articles in this book cover the period 1933-44, during which Henry Wallace held office successively as Minister for Agriculture and vice-President of the USA, and represent the reactions of a brilliant and realistic mind to the social and economic problems of a revolutionary stage in the world's history. Henry Wallace believes in free enterprise, but also in freedom for everyone. He is not opposed, if necessary, to government interference. He condemns, on the contrary, those 'private and secret super-governments controlling major branches of world industry and not accountable to the people'. The American people, he believes, could, if they wished, raise their standard of living 50 per cent. but, in doing so, must violate many of their cherished convictions. Henry Wallace is not a socialist. He hopes that, after the war, investment and exports will be financed by private concerns but under the supervision of some type of united nations authority. He accepts, in fact, the fundamental socialist principle that the purpose of industry is to serve the people and not the vested interests of small but, socially and economically, powerful cliques.

B. D.

**PILOT GUIDE TO POLITICAL LONDON** By E. C. R. Hadfield and J. E. MacColl (Pilot Press 7/6)**LOCAL GOVERNMENT HANDBOOK, 1945-6** (Labour Party 1/3)

'Ah! but what about London? Isn't it all different there?' The Fabian who finds himself stumped by that evergreen query will relish this new Pilot Guide, written simply and straightforwardly by two experienced members of the Paddington Metropolitan Borough Council. This valuable handbook is timely, appearing as it does on the eve of the municipal and LCC elections. It is comprehensive yet astonishingly brief, factual but not dull, well indexed, and embellished with summarised statistics for each borough. Many Labour candidates to whom I have recommended it find it invaluable. And even when the elections are over, it should be a boon to tutors and tutored in the LCC area, though not, let it be noted—in the Greater London ring. Though not up to the standard of the General Election Handbook, the Labour Party's new Local Government Handbook continues the new and welcome departure of giving, not dry, random and unco-ordinated data, but concise background sketches of various aspects of local government, which are of educational value to all but the most experienced candidates.

J. C. G.



**FALMOUTH MASSACHUSETTS—A STUDY OF COMMUNITY LIFE IN A RESORT TOWN** By Millard C. Fought (Milford 18/6)

This is the story of an American holiday town—the varying needs of its permanent residents and its seasonal guests, the frictions between resident and non-resident tax payers or the rival claims of highways and beaches versus schools and welfare, its underlying seasonal duality affecting even such things as the religious life of the community, the curriculum of the schools and sense of values of the children. The growth of the present-day holiday resort has created a number of problems which hitherto have been little considered.

B. D.

**BRITAIN AND THE BIRTH-RATE** Mass Observation (Murray 21/-)

'Mass Observation' is an independent body concerned with the ascertaining of facts. The present survey does not pretend to solve the population problem, but has sought as many pointers as possible by means of personal interviews and correspondence with married couples. Parents today, the survey concludes, do not want large families, and know how to prevent them. Family allowances in cash or kind, subsidised housing and domestic assistance, improved maternity and children's services, can remove difficulties. They will not in themselves produce enough children to keep the race from extinction. 'Having a lot of children, like drinking a lot of beer, may well be related more closely to ignorance and apathy than to poverty.' The solution lies in a change of heart or outlook. Religion in the past gave to child-birth a sense of community purpose. This has now lost its power and can only be replaced by a new sense of social obligation and security in return against war or want. The clue for a population policy may be found in the comment of a working mother: 'I want my children to have something to hope for when they grow up'.

B. D.

**ENGLISH COURTS OF LAW** By H. G. Hanbury (Home University Library 3/6)

Anyone interested in the history of our judicial institutions should be grateful for the appearance of this able and concise account of the origin, development and present functioning of the English Courts of Law. The author's style is attractive, and his amusing metaphors often enable a complex course of events to be understood in a minute. This book should enable those who read newspaper reports of criminal and political trials to follow the proceedings with quickened interest and widened comprehension.

R. S. W. P.

**FILM AND THE FUTURE** By Andrew Buchanan (Allen & Unwin 6/-)

The film's power and uses as a medium have long been underestimated. In Britain its general educational value was not fully realised till the development of the documentary film and of 16 mm. non-theatrical distribution in the early 'thirties. Mr Buchanan deals with the future of the film on this level, and as a means of encouraging international understanding. He makes many suggestions, both general and technical, but unfortunately tends at times to spoil his case by an excess of cliché and sentiment.

S. R.

**TWO COMMONWEALTHS** By K. E. Holme (The Soviets and Ourselves Series, Harrap 7/6)

This book contains a concise outline of how the Soviet system works out in practice. The institutions of the USSR are contrasted with those of Britain in an objective fashion and their present forms are viewed in perspective to their very diverse history. The shortness of the book makes for oversimplification of complicated issues, inevitable in an outline of this kind. It should prove a useful introduction to all who wish to learn what the machinery of government is like in the USSR. Historical and other facts are painlessly injected by means of coloured Isotype charts.

R. B.

**AUTOBIOGRAPHY** By Viscount Samuel (Cresset Press, 1945 15/-)

The life of a Liberal, by himself. Interesting to historians for accounts, by one who was more or less 'on the inside' of Liberal politics, particularly in the years between 1896 and 1916 (when Lord Samuel declined office in the wartime Coalition Government of Lloyd George; also valuable for the author's recollections of his service as High Commissioner in Palestine, of his ill-fated 'mediation' in the 1926 General Strike, when he produced a Memorandum for the settlement of the mining dispute which had no authority but his own and served in the event only to encourage the T.U.C. to withdraw support from the Miners' Federation; further, for a resumé of the 1931 debacle and an exposé of Ramsay MacDonald's double-dealing. On the human side, less interesting after the first chapter or two on the author's early life and aspirations. Straight political Liberalism would seem to narrow the interests and to produce an arid style.

M. I. C.

**PATRICK GEDDES** By Philip Boardman (H. Milford 30/-)

Patrick Geddes seems to have been one of those much-gifted men who, given enough time, could have been all things to all men. Thomas Huxley acclaimed him as a zoologist. As a town planner, he was an international figure. This is an interesting and comprehensive book on his life and is unusually readable  
J. W.

**WOMEN AND WORK** By Gertrude Williams (Nicholson and Watson 5/-)

This book is welcome at a time when much controversy rages round the subject of the conditions of employment and pay of women. Gertrude Williams, while avoiding the excesses of the feminists, shows a wide knowledge of the subject and throws considerable light on the problems of the future of women in employment in the post-war world.

The book is worth owning for its isotypes alone and much can be inferred by a careful study of them.

A. M.

